
MEDICAL HISTORY

A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THIRTEEN UNHERALDED CONTRIBUTORS TO MEDICODENTAL PROGRESS

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Professional dental education continues to neglect dental history in the curriculum, and this neglect has been compounded by the additional failure to include in the record the accomplishments of the profession's minority members. In the interests of historical accuracy, this article presents the career profiles of 13 Afro-American dentists. Their participation occurred at times when their contributions went largely unnoticed. Mainstream organized dentistry habitually slighted these dentists; nevertheless, they effectively shared in dentistry's advancements.

GROUNDBREAKING

Formal education of Afro-Americans in the dental profession began with Robert T. Freeman, the son of slaves from North Carolina. The inclusion of Afro-Americans into organized dentistry began with a physician-dentist, Robert F. Boyd, the son of slaves from Tennessee.

Robert T. Freeman

Robert Tanner Freeman was the trailblazer gaining passage to dental education. Because one of the most influential local dental societies of black dentists, the Robert T. Freeman Dental Society of Washington, DC, was named in his honor in 1890, Freeman is well known to Afro-American dentists.

Freeman was born in Washington, DC, circa 1846, the son of a carpenter who had migrated to Raleigh, NC, after buying his own and his wife's freedom from slavery. In his late teens, Freeman worked as dental assistant and apprentice in the office of a Dr. Noble, a white dentist in Washington. Dr. Noble became impressed with Freeman's ability, tutored him in many fundamental techniques, and then encouraged him to study dentistry.

Accepted but then rejected because of race at two dental schools, Freeman corresponded with Harvard University's School of Dental Medicine. He was interviewed by Dr. Nathan Cooley Keep, first dean of the newly organized faculty (1867), and was accepted in accordance with the policy that the new institution "would know no distinction of nativity or color." One of the first six students in Harvard's program, Freeman became the first Afro-American to graduate with a dental degree in the United States on March 10, 1869 (Figure 1).

Freeman opened his office in Washington, DC, but four years later, on June 10, 1873, his much-needed services to the city's minority population were abruptly foreclosed by his death. Although his early demise robbed Freeman of the opportunity to realize his full potential, his ambition, determination, and foresight opened a new chapter in the health professions.

Robert F. Boyd

A pioneer in organizing minority health professionals, Robert F. Boyd was the first president of the National Negro Medical Association, founded in 1895 in Atlanta. It included physicians, dentists, and pharmacists, a circumstance in which Boyd played a significant role.

Born of slave parents on July 8, 1858, in Pulaski, Tenn, Robert Fulton Boyd received his MD degree in

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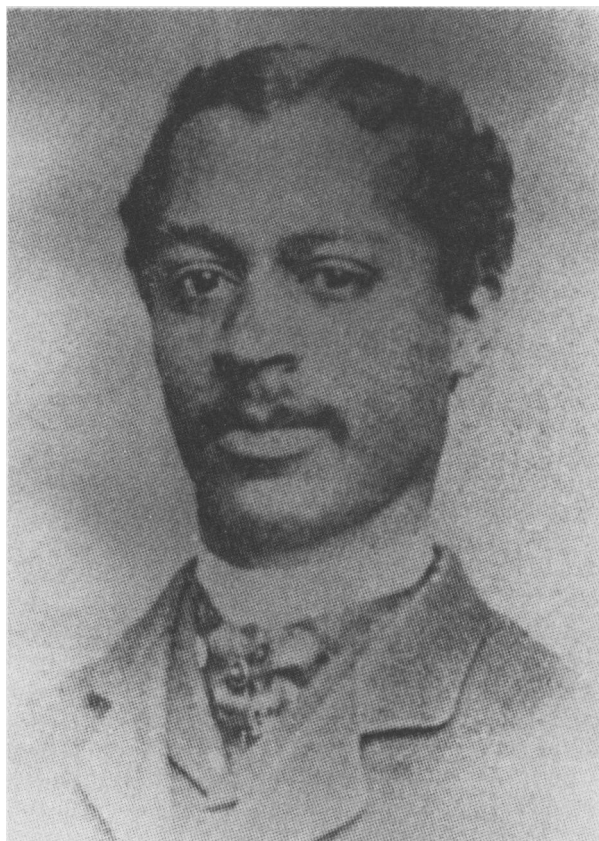


Figure 1. Robert Tanner Freeman, DDS

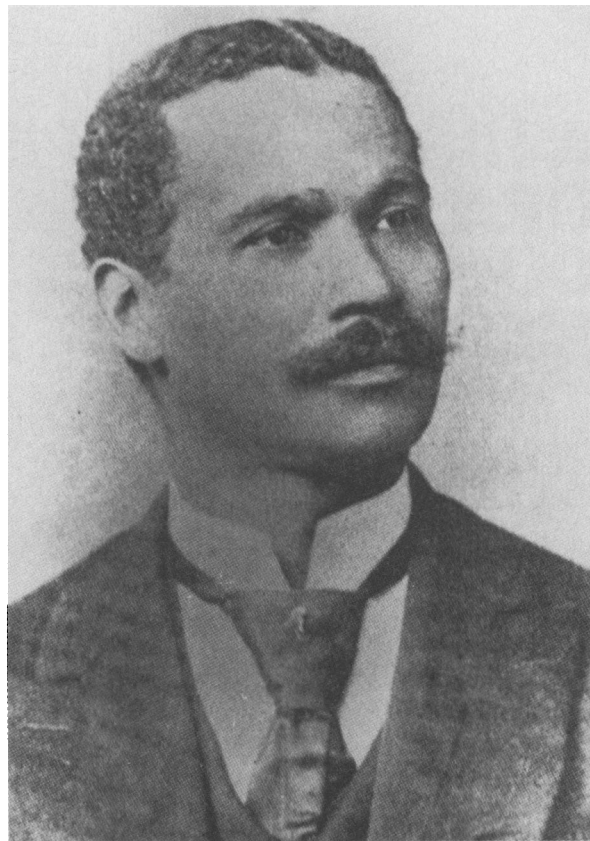


Figure 2. Robert F. Boyd, MD, DDS

1882 and his DDS degree in 1887 from Meharry Medical College, Nashville, Tenn. He began practicing medicine and dentistry on June 11, 1887, becoming the first Afro-American to do so in Nashville (Figure 2).

The majority of his contributions were to the medical profession; however, his dual professional role was a dominant asset in stimulating positive medicodental relations. His philosophy of mutual cooperation and respect, along with strong, intelligent leadership, were the cornerstone on which the National Medical Association (NMA) and other minority health professional organizations came into being.

John Wesley Anderson

John Wesley Anderson was another physician-dentist whose philanthropic contributions to medical and dental education were unique for his time. Originally from Texas, Anderson received his MD from Meharry Medical College in 1885. It is significant to note that Ander-

son was a dental classmate of Boyd and also received his DDS in 1887. Anderson practiced medicine and dentistry in Nashville until 1889 when he moved to Dallas where he remained for the rest of his professional life (Figure 3). He had a successful medical practice for 55 years, and several lucrative business investments established him as a wealthy Southerner. Anderson's unique contributions centered on his consistent and generous donations to his alma mater, which enabled that institution to build several science and medical laboratories, including the Anderson Anatomical Laboratory. At a period when such gifts from minority members of the profession were unusual, Anderson encouraged other alumni to follow his example. He served as president of the Meharry Alumni Association for several years.

BROADENING PERCEPTIONS

The groundbreaking endeavors by Freeman, Boyd, and Anderson were enhanced by an influential quartet



Figure 3. John Wesley Anderson, MD, DDS

among the first dentists to affiliate with the NMA. They energetically participated in medical organizational activities and developed skills that facilitated the growth and development of minority dental societies.

David A. Ferguson

David Arthur Ferguson, the first Afro-American dentist to pass the Virginia State Board of Dental Examiners, was a native of Portsmouth, Ohio, and was educated in Kentucky and Washington, DC. Born in 1875, Ferguson completed his elementary and secondary education in Bowling Green, Ky, where he was an apprentice for Dr. CP Dennis, a white dentist. He enrolled in the dental school at Howard University in 1896 and graduated in 1899, whereupon he opened his office in Richmond, Va.

To keep up with scientific advancements, Ferguson joined the NMA and ultimately became a leader in the

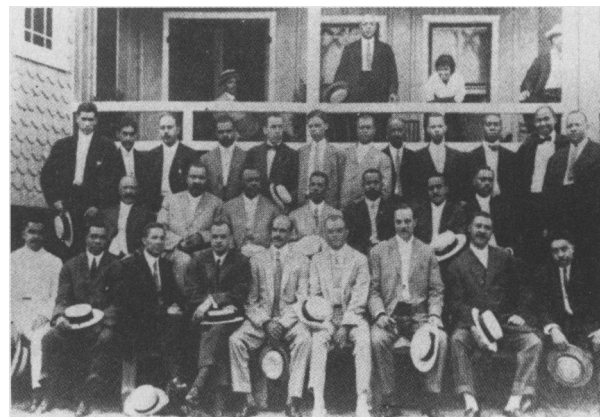


Figure 4: The first meeting of the Tri-State Dental Association (predecessor of the National Dental Association) in 1913 at Buckroe Beach, Va. Dr. D.A. Ferguson, founder and president, is seated fourth from left.

Dental Section, which had grown into a highly constructive department introducing annual scientific programs of special benefit to practicing dentists. By 1905, convinced of the need for a separate dental organization, Ferguson attempted to form a National Association of Negro Dentists. The effort failed, but the thrust toward independence continued. Ferguson organized the Old Dominion Dental Society of Virginia while maintaining an active role in the NMA.

A major success arrived in July 1913 when Ferguson's efforts produced the Tri-State Dental Association at Buckroe Beach, Va. Membership was drawn from the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia and Ferguson was elected president. By 1918 the organization had outgrown its original boundaries and was reorganized into the Interstate Dental Association, with Ferguson still serving as president (Figure 4).

Possessed of unmistakable leadership qualities, Ferguson was named president-elect of the NMA in 1917, marking the first time that a dentist was chosen to head the organization predominantly of physicians and surgeons. During his tenure as president he traveled 5,000 miles to attend meetings of component and constituent societies. He stressed the need for the NMA, pleaded for intraorganizational cooperation, pressed for support of the Association's official journal, encouraged more participation by the members of the Pharmacy Section, and called for lessened antagonism between urban and rural general practitioners.



Figure 5. Stephen J. Lewis, DDS

Throughout his career, Ferguson never wavered in his service to dentistry and in encouraging solidarity among professional men and women. In 1932, when all rights to the title "National Dental Association" were released by the American Dental Association, the Interstate Dental Association was renamed National Dental Association (NDA). Ferguson was selected to be the first president of the new organization. Three years later, on February 10, 1935, Ferguson died knowing that his dream of a national organization of Afro-American dentists was a reality.

Stephen J. Lewis

After his graduation from Howard University College of Dentistry in 1909, Stephen Johnson Lewis, born July 19, 1882 in Manassas, Va, entered the fledgling ranks of

black dentists who recognized the importance of and the need for organized dentistry (Figure 5). He joined the NMA and gave unstintingly of his energy and special talents to enhance dentistry.

A private practitioner, Lewis settled first in Harrisburg, Pa, and moved to Washington, DC in the mid-1920s. After eight years he returned to Manassas, where he remained to the end of his life. Without diminishing a paramount concern for the welfare of his patients, Lewis became deeply involved in NMA affairs and followed the example of his colleague David Ferguson. Working to unify dental professionals, Lewis was supportive of and active in the Tri-State Dental Society. Additionally, in 1915 he helped found the Central Pennsylvania State Medical, Dental and Pharmaceutical Society, and later guided its Dental Section to achieve outstanding status as a component of the new Interstate Dental Association. In 1920, Lewis was elected to a two-year term as the third president of the Interstate Dental Association. During the second year of his presidency he established the Interstate Dental Association Free Lecture Course to benefit the senior dental classes of Howard University and Meharry Medical College. The objectives were to stimulate high ethical standards and to build a closer cooperation between experienced and neophyte dentists.

It was Lewis's writing and speaking skills that distinguished him and reinforced the impetus toward dental independence. He took a leading role in the educational activities of the NMA Dental Section and was rewarded by appointment as editor of the NMA Dental Section, a post he held for 15 years.

Lewis published the first article about black dentists in the July 24, 1924 issue of *Opportunity*, a monthly journal of black life prepared by the Research and Investigations Department of the National Urban League and edited by the internationally renowned sociologist Dr. Charles S. Johnson. In his article, titled "The Negro in the Field of Dentistry," Lewis reviewed the involvement of black dentists in the profession and the advances that had been made up to that time. On April 28, 1924, Dr. William Gies of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching wrote to Lewis requesting his views on the dental education needs of black Americans. Two years later, in 1926, Gies published his historic report, *Dental Education in the United States and Canada*. The fifth chapter, titled "Negro Dental Education," represented the collaborative efforts of Lewis and Gies.

Although faithful in his commitment to the multidisciplinary NMA, Lewis felt a special allegiance to his fellow dentists and their desire for autonomy. His

thoughts were expressed in an editorial, "Will We Ever Become an Organized Dental Group?" published in the October/December 1928 issue of *The Journal of the National Medical Association*. The editorial advanced the opinion that while self-direction was a laudable goal, the dental group at that time could best be accommodated within the NMA. With the advent of the National Dental Association (NDA) in 1932, black dentists were recognized as equal partners in the health professions. Dr. Peter M. Murray, NMA president, suggested that the NMA welcome the NDA as a separate and indispensable health agency.

Lewis's final extended work was a chapter titled "A review of the history of the National Dental Association," contributed to the 1952 book *The Growth and Development of the Negro in Dentistry in the United States*.

Communication via dental journalism was a tool valued by Lewis in furthering the aims of organized dentistry as well as inculcating both intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships. There is general consensus that Lewis's major contribution to the NDA was his founding and promotion of the Association's official publication, *The Bulletin*. Under his expert guidance *The Bulletin* grew in content, and in October 1942 he made the change to a journal format. He completed all the preparatory work for the April 1951 issue of *The Bulletin*; however, on March 29, 1951, one week prior to its publication, Stephen Lewis died.

Roscoe C. Brown

Roscoe Conkling Brown was born in Washington, DC on October 14, 1884, the son of John Robert and Blanche Maguire Brown. A graduate of Dunbar High School, he received his degree from the College of Dentistry, Howard University, in 1906 (Figure 6). One of the early dentists showing an inordinate interest in the social and public health aspects of dentistry, Brown furthered his knowledge in these areas by attending Columbia and Harvard universities for additional work in statistics, population, and health problems, receiving certificates in special studies from these institutions. From 1906 to 1915 Brown practiced dentistry in Washington, DC and Richmond, Va, where he also was an instructor in hygiene and sanitation at the Richmond Hospital Training School for Nurses.

Brown's health interests were first fulfilled in his association with the NMA, in which he became editor of dental affairs for the Association's journal. His record with the Dental Section paved the way for his appointment as executive secretary of the NMA, a post he held

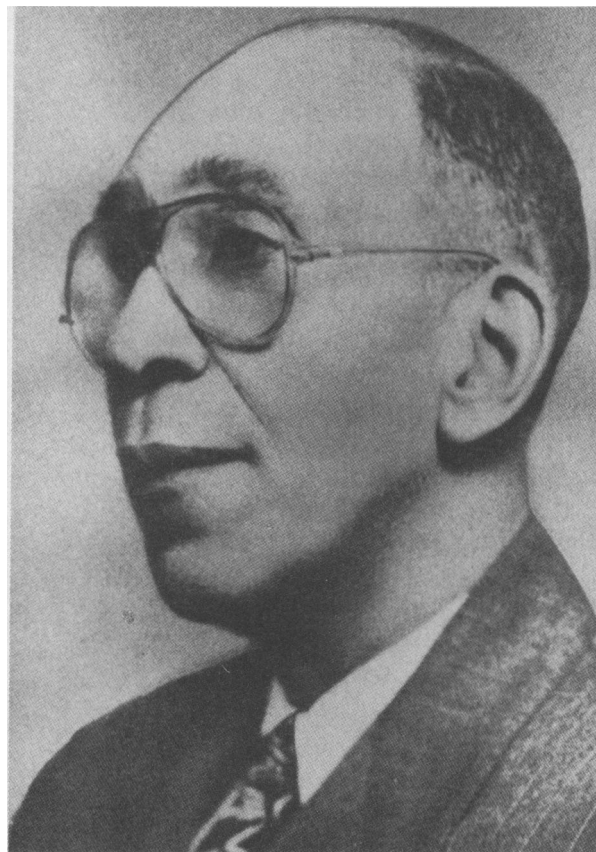


Figure 6. Roscoe C. Brown, DDS

for four years. He also was the managing editor of the NMA journal.

During World War I, he served as a consultant in military health problems for the office of the Army Surgeon General. He also reorganized the Department of Chemistry at Virginia Union University and taught there as a war emergency service. In addition, he lectured at military camps in extracantonment zones in the eastern and southeastern United States. At the conclusion of the war, he was a lecturer, special consultant, and senior health education consultant for the United States Public Health Service. Through the National Negro Health Work of the Public Health Service he was able to improve conditions among minority groups. This was an outgrowth of a program for Negro health improvement initiated in 1915 by Booker T. Washington of Tuskegee Institute. Washington inspired public and private agencies to improve the health of black people



Figure 7. William D. Giles, DDS

through education in the principles of healthful living. The churches, schools, health agencies, and civic groups were the avenues by which health information was conveyed to the people. A week in April, Washington's birth month, was proclaimed National Negro Health Week and was reserved for intensive effort. It became a rallying point for sponsorship and participation of groups and agencies. In 1921 when the National Negro Health Week proceedings were transferred from Tuskegee Institute to the Public Health Service, Brown directed associated activities. National Negro Health Week and Negro Health Work were programs of adaptation with the distinct goal of improving the health of Afro-Americans in segregated communities through intrasocial self-help and interracial cooperation.

In 1930 the annual Health Week conference established the program on a year-round basis and changed the name to the National Negro Health Movement. An

executive committee composed of representatives from the sponsoring agencies planned the program.

From 1932 to 1950 the Public Health Service sponsored and supported the movement and supplied staff, facilities, and material for nationwide activities. During these years, Brown was the chairman of the National Negro Health Week Committee and director of the National Negro Health Movement. His work in these areas and his role as editor of the *National Negro Health News* were highly praised and proved so successful that in 1950 there was no longer an urgency to emphasize separate needs. The Federal Security Administrator, Oscar R. Ewing, announced the termination of the National Negro Health Movement program in 1950 and Brown played a major role in transferring the Office of Negro Health Work to the Special Programs Branch, Division of Health Education of the Public Health Service. He became the first chief of this new division and continued to give consultative services to black groups in their communities.

There were problems associated with Brown's functions in this capacity at a time when it was generally believed that an individual with the MD or PhD degree should occupy this post. Brown's preparation for his assignment, his competence in carrying out his duties, and his amiable personality overcame jealousies and challenges, and eventually won the full cooperation of all concerned. He continued his exemplary performance until his formal retirement from the Public Health Service on October 29, 1954, at which time the Health Education and Welfare Secretary, Oveta Culp Hobby, paid him special tributes. He died in 1963 at age 79, fully recognized and accepted as a pioneer in public health generally and dental public health specifically.

William D. Giles

The process of group dynamics and interplay were crucial in the development of a medicodental organization. Tensions and conflicting interests frequently threatened the stability and productivity of the entire venture. The role of mediator was ably filled by William Dickerson Giles, born in 1885 in Hillsboro, NC, who obtained the BS and DDS degrees from Howard University. His father, William H. Giles, had the distinction of earning a PhD from Indiana University at age 60.

William Dickerson Giles began his dental practice in Evansville, Ind, before moving to Chicago where he received his second dental degree from Northwestern University Dental School in 1917 (Figure 7). For the next 40 years he maintained a practice in Chicago. His ardent interest in oral surgery prompted him to spend two years

with Joseph A. Schaefer, MD, DDS, at Cook County Hospital, and for 16 years he attended Northwestern's weekly oral surgery clinics directed by Frederick W. Merrifield, MD, DDS, professor of oral surgery. This training enabled him to become a valued member of the visiting dental staff at Provident Hospital, and he eventually became chairman of the hospital's dental department.

Giles was an active member of the NMA, gaining experience and developing skills that led to recognition and approbation by his colleagues in the NMA and other professional organizations. He performed editorial duties for the Dental Section, wrote scientific articles, and assisted Stephen Lewis and Roscoe Brown in arranging dental programs for the annual meetings. In 1933 he was elected chairman of the Dental Section NMA, and in his annual address Giles argued that membership in NMA did not preclude membership in NDA and creation of the latter did not signify antipathy to the former. This was in response to rumblings of dissatisfactions and sensitivities associated with the establishment of the National Dental Association and separation from the NMA. His capacity for conciliation and intelligent compromise helped propel him to the presidency of the NDA in 1950.

Other professional organizations occupied his attention. He worked diligently in founding and developing one of NDA's components, the Lincoln Dental Society of Chicago. He combined his duties as NDA president with active participation as a member of the Chicago Dental Society, the Illinois State Dental Society (ISDS), and the American Dental Association. He was one of a very small number of Afro-American dentists to become Life Members of the ISDS. During World War II, Giles received a US Presidential Citation for his work with the Selective Service and Office of Price Administration.

A full working schedule did not prevent Giles from exercising nondental talents that also enriched the community. An accomplished musician, he performed as a pianist and vocalist and composed the "Signature March" for Chicago's Old Eighth Army Regiment in which he served as a member of the Medical Corps. He directed the 25-piece orchestra of Chicago's Metropolitan Community Church of which he was a founder-member, and in later years he directed the choir of Chicago's Lincoln Memorial Congregational Church.

His was a life of attention to duty and concern for the welfare of others, and for these attributes he was beloved and respected. He was successful in stimulating medicodental cooperation to solve mutual professional problems. It is for his quiet political diplomacy and his ability

to get along with colleagues of opposing viewpoints that Giles will be remembered.

DEDICATION AND DETERMINATION

Ferguson, Lewis, Brown, and Giles were effective in creating a momentum that would not only preserve past gains but also allow for an inevitable broadening of professional perceptions. Black dentists had begun to see themselves as true participants in American dentistry albeit restricted by de facto and de jure discrimination. The following sextet demonstrate convincingly that dentistry is the richer because of their personal determination and dedication to service.

John and Vada Somerville

"The dentist as a member of the community—enhancing the image of dentistry" aptly describes the joint careers of John and Vada Somerville, a unique husband and wife dental team. Born in Jamaica in 1882, John was the son of Thomas G. and Frances A. Somerville. His father was a school master and an acknowledged community leader. Vada, the daughter of California pioneers who had migrated from Arkansas, was born in Pomona, Calif, November 1, 1885.

John Somerville was educated in Jamaica, including college preparatory. His strong urge to attend college in the United States propelled him to ignore all obstacles in pursuit of his goal. He arrived in San Francisco in February 1902 and, unsuccessful in finding employment, soon moved to Redlands, Calif, where he worked at odd jobs. Somerville finally opted for dentistry and moved to Los Angeles. Despite a number of roadblocks and discouraging incidents, he gained entrance into the dental college of the University of Southern California (USC). He worked his way through dental school and graduated with high honors in 1907. He was the first Afro-American not only to graduate from USC's dental school, but was also the first to receive a diploma from any college in the university (Figure 8).

Somerville opened a dental office in Los Angeles. His clientele was at first predominantly white and remained so for several years, becoming interracial as more minorities moved west. Somerville successfully combined his professional obligations to his patients and dentistry with his perceptions of civic responsibility.

An ardent foe of racial discrimination, the Los Angeles branch of the NAACP was organized in Somerville's home and he became its first vice president. He served for years on the national board of the NAACP, and during the 1930s as technical advisor to the California Relief Administration in efforts to integrate black per-



Figure 8. John A. Somerville, DDS



Figure 9. Vada Watson Somerville, DDS

sons into the program. The erection of an attractive, modern hotel in Los Angeles in 1927 was Somerville's response to an offensive experience in seeking hotel accommodations: while on a trip to San Francisco he was unable to find a hotel that would accept black Americans as guests. The Somerville Hotel was considered the finest for black patronage in America, and was the NAACP's national convention headquarters in 1928.

Somerville was a leader in many constructive civic and welfare programs, becoming one of southern California's most distinguished civic leaders serving all elements of the population: he was founder of the Physicians, Dentists, and Pharmacists Association of Southern California, organized in 1927; he served as a delegate to the 1936 Democratic National Convention in Philadelphia; during World War II he was a member of the Advisory Board of the Los Angeles Draft Board No. 253 and examining dentist for the Board. Mayor Fletcher Bowron appointed him to the Los Angeles Police Com-

mission in 1949 and he served until 1953, becoming vice president. For his many years of furthering Anglo-American affairs, Queen Elizabeth II of England conferred upon him the title of Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 1953.

The first modern apartment building in the western United States to be occupied by Afro-Americans was another of Somerville's contributions to the quality of life in Los Angeles. Constructed in 1928, the building was named the LaVada Apartments in tribute to his wife, Vada J. Watson, whom he married on October 16, 1912.

Vada Watson resided with her family in Los Angeles where she grew up and attended school. Following her marriage, Mrs. Somerville later worked as an assistant in her husband's office. Convinced of her aptitude, he encouraged her to study dentistry. She enrolled in the School of Dentistry at USC and graduated in the dental class of 1918 (Figure 9). Vada Watson Somerville was the first black woman dentist educated at USC and the only

female in her class of 88 graduates.

The Somervilles practiced dentistry and worked to advance their community in a partnership that lasted for half a century. The personal contributions of Vada Somerville complemented those of her husband. Many local chapters of service organizations had their inceptions in her home, and she played an important role in spreading dental health education among the groups. As one of the first female dental graduates of USC, she actively encouraged young women to choose dentistry as a career. She was member of the Democratic Women's Forum, Los Angeles County Human Relations Commission, and the University YMCA at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). She was founder and charter member of Alpha Gamma Omega chapter of the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority, and founder of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Council of Negro Women. She was a charter member and served as the first president of the Los Angeles chapter of Links, Inc.

The Somervilles celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on October 12, 1972. Seventeen days later, Vada Somerville died, ending a long and harmonious partnership. Following an extended illness, at the age of 91, John Somerville died on February 11, 1973 at Los Angeles Good Samaritan Hospital.

Russell A. Dixon

Among the recognized leaders in American dental education, no dean has equaled the tenure record of Russell Dixon, who shaped and molded the dental college of Howard University.

The son of William James and Lillie Belle Tribue Dixon, Russell Alexander Dixon was born in Kansas City, Mo, February 24, 1898. His was a family of modest means and his early years were made the more difficult by the death of his mother and family disintegration. Diligent and ambitious, he relished hard work and persisted despite unfavorable times. In his late teens he moved to Virginia and in 1918 enrolled at Hampton Institute. He was a creditable student and distinguished himself as a center on the football team. Nevertheless, Dixon felt he was not acquiring the educational background he needed, and after a year he traveled to Grand Rapids, Mich, and enrolled at Ferris Institute. He proved to be an enterprising student, supporting himself by working at odd jobs around the institution. This serious application to study and self-help gained the attention and support of the institute's President Ferris who became a lifelong friend and counsellor. Ferris was later elected to the US Senate.

Dixon remained at Ferris Institute from 1920 to 1924

and then was accepted at Northwestern University Dental School. Once again he was able to study, work, and support himself. Augmented by tuition scholarships, Dixon fulfilled his ambition to become a dentist, receiving his DDS degree in 1929. Two events diverted his plans to start a private practice: he received a Rosenwald Fellowship to continue studies in oral pathology at Northwestern, and he was offered an appointment as instructor of operative dentistry at Howard University College of Dentistry. He executed the two assignments successfully.

Dixon's task at Howard was to reorganize the department of operative dentistry. Following an administrative disruption at the dental college, Dixon was appointed acting dean in 1931. He received the Master of Science in Dentistry from Northwestern in 1933, the first of two Afro-Americans to receive the school's MSD degree, and was promptly confirmed as full dean of Howard's College of Dentistry. It was in this capacity that Dixon distinguished himself by serving for 35 years and holding that title longer than anyone in the history of American dental education.

During his years at Howard, Dixon instituted high standards for both preparatory and dental school education; reorganized the teaching system and encouraged higher academic preparation of the dental faculty; revised the curriculum; raised student entrance requirements; and instituted plans for the improvement of the college's outmoded physical plant, culminating in the completion of a new \$3.5 million building in 1955, which was named The Russell A. Dixon College of Dentistry of Howard University (Figure 10).

Always in evidence was Dixon's commitment to racial integration and sexual equality in dental education. It is to his everlasting credit that the students, faculty, and staff of the college were integrated throughout his tenure. Additionally, he thoroughly supported the philosophy that more women should be encouraged to study dentistry. The creation of a university dental college with liberal sprinklings of men and women of every racial, religious, and ethnic representation is a tribute to the effectiveness of an American who had himself faced and overcome the burdens and consequences of legalized segregation.

Numerous and varied administrative and professional connections commanded Dixon's energy and attention. Among the most prized were the presidencies of the Pan-American Odontological Society and the NDA. As the senior dean in terms of length of service, Dixon served on the Executive Council of the American Association of Dental Schools from 1953 to 1967 and was chairman



Figure 10. Testimonial banquet by R.T. Freeman Dental Society and College of Dentistry Howard University honoring Dean Dixon. (Left

to right) R.E. McLaughlin, Commissioner, District of Columbia; R.C. Brown; Archibald Carey; M.R. Dean; W.K. Collins.

of the Committee on Teaching. In 1963 President Kennedy appointed him to a four-year term as a member of the Board of Regents of the National Library of Medicine, a facility that houses the world's largest collection of health-related scientific literature. Also, for five years he was a member of the Board of Overseers Visiting Committee of Harvard University for the Schools of Medicine and Dental Medicine and of the Special Advisory Group of the Veterans Administration.

Among Dixon's most cherished extracurricular activities were his extensive duties with the Lincoln Memorial Temple (United Church of Christ) and the Board of Directors of the Council for Christian Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches. He served as general chairman of the Middle Atlantic Conference Committee on Higher Education and chairman of its Missions Council. He was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Washington Area Council on Alcoholism.

Dixon's long and distinguished service in dental education stands as a mark of excellence to be emulated by those who view dental education and research as lofty careers dedicated to serving their fellow humans without regard for race, religion, or socioeconomic status.

Roscoe F. Lee

Seventy-eight years after the first Afro-American graduated from Harvard's dental school, Roscoe Lee assured himself a place on the ladder of historical achievement in dentistry when he was certified a Diplomate of the American Board of Oral Surgery.

Roscoe Franklin Lee was born May 30, 1898, in Washington, DC, where he received his education from Dunbar High School, the College of Liberal Arts of Howard University, and the DDS degree from Howard's College of Dentistry in 1922 (Figure 11). These attainments were a tribute to the modest but wholesome family

continued on page 317

continued from page 316

environment created by his father, the Reverend Joseph Lee.

Although Lee entered the general practice of dentistry and maintained a private practice, he entertained thoughts about becoming proficient in a particular dental specialty. Oral surgery had been especially attractive to him and he decided to improve his skills by joining the staff of Washington's Freedmen's Hospital in 1924. Along with clinical services he continued to study the fundamentals of the specialty by participating in postgraduate courses and taking instruction in internal medicine and physical diagnosis from his friend and colleague, Dr. E. Clayton Terry, associate professor of medicine at Howard University's medical school. His concern and diligence stimulated the organization of the first Oral Surgery Department at Freedmen's Hospital in 1926. He was appointed chief of the Oral Surgery Staff and Senior Visiting Oral Surgeon, and headed the department until 1936. Lee sharpened his pedagogical skills by teaching courses about oral diseases in the hospital's Training School for Nurses.

Unrelenting in his quest for competency, it was Lee's good fortune to develop a friendship with and train under Dr. Sterling Mead, internationally renowned oral surgeon. Further study included several courses with Dr. Reed Dingman, associate professor of oral surgery at the University of Michigan, and more than eight observation courses at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minn. Having acquired the necessary didactic and experiential background to satisfy the credentials committee of the American Board of Oral Surgery, he was accepted for official inspection. Following a penetrating examination in 1947, he was the first Afro-American to be certified as a Diplomate of the American Board of Oral Surgery. Lee's accomplishment, widely hailed among his colleagues and the nation's Afro-American dentists, was particularly important inasmuch as the American Board of Oral Surgery was dentistry's first and one of its most prestigious specialty boards.

Lee and his wife were faithful Episcopalians and very active in church affairs. Their only daughter, Camille, regarded her father as a role model and followed him into dentistry. She was a junior dental student at Howard University at the time of her father's death. Enroute to Washington after a seven-week European tour, Lee suffered a fatal heart attack July 29, 1956, aboard the SS United States. While in London he was given a citation in oral surgery by the Eastman Dental Clinic where in 1954 he had continued his postgraduate studies with the famed English oral surgeon, Sir William K. Fry.



Figure 11. Roscoe F. Lee, DDS

Lee was an enthusiastic member of the Robert T. Freeman Dental Society and he allied himself with the society's programs to achieve racial integration in the professional arenas. He broke new ground and raised the horizon for those who would come after him. Lee's pioneering in one of dentistry's most popular and difficult specialties continues to be an inspiration to Afro-American dentists, many of whom have been attracted to this specialty and have become proficient Board-certified practitioners.

Harold S. Fleming

The mainline scientific activities of Harold Fleming epitomized the steady progress in American dentistry by Afro-American participants. Born of West Indian parentage in Brooklyn, NY, October 9, 1904, Harold Steadman Fleming was reared in a middle-class environment. His father, Richard Fleming, a practicing dentist, soon moved to New Haven, Conn, where Harold received his

early education. After graduation from Brown University in 1926 with a PhD degree, Harold chose dentistry as a career. In 1930 he received the DMD degree from Harvard's School of Dental Medicine and a dental internship at the Forsyth Dental Infirmary. For the next 18 years he practiced with his father in New Haven.

The course of Fleming's career changed markedly in 1949 when he accepted an assistant residency in oral surgery at the Grace New Haven Hospital. Upon completion, he pursued a full-time career in dental education and research. In 1950 he received a Spaulding Fellowship and was appointed Clinical Instructor at the Yale University School of Medicine. There followed a succession of opportunities. With a US Public Health Service Fellowship, he enrolled in the Graduate School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, earning the MS degree and a DSc in 1952. In that same year he was appointed a research assistant in the Department of Pathology at Yale, continuing his research training and perfecting his investigatory techniques. In 1955 he was promoted to research associate at Yale.

While at Yale, Fleming initiated and completed a number of well-appreciated studies and publications. He instructed medical students and researchers in laboratory techniques; extended his own special interests in the differentiation and organization of transplanted tooth germs under varying conditions; and pursued research in transportation of human neoplasms of the oral cavity, induction of the cancer process in vivo transplants and in situ salivary glands, and induction of atypical development of tooth germ elements.

It was during these productive years that he was offered an appointment at Howard University College of Dentistry. In 1958 Fleming became professor of research at the college and embarked upon wide-ranging research efforts at that institution. As his own research productivity increased markedly, he published more than 70 research articles in established scientific journals in the United States, Europe, and Asia, and traveled around the world to lecture on his work. He was one of the early Afro-American Fellows of the International College of Dentists, and held memberships in the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the New York Academy of Science, and the International Association for Dental Research.

Barely five years after his move to Howard University, Fleming died on December 25, 1963. His colleagues at Howard paid high tribute to Fleming's successful efforts to stimulate and develop dental research activities among both students and faculty of that institution. He elevated the standards of dental education at Howard's

College of Dentistry and left an indelible record of achievement not only in his special research contributions but also in the endeavor to establish the significance of dental research in dental education.

James C. Wallace, Jr.

In the early 20th century, Afro-American dentists assumed prominence in the quest for the removal of racial barriers in the American way of life. Later generations continued to push for social justice, among whom none was more outstanding than James Carroll Wallace, Jr., born July 14, 1922 in Beaumont, Tex.

The second son of Maude and James Wallace, Wallace received all of his early education in Beaumont's public schools. His father was a highly respected physician and his mother was an active school teacher; hence Wallace was strongly motivated to scholastic achievement. He attended Wiley College in Marshall, Tex, graduating with the BS degree in 1941. In that same year he entered Meharry College's dental school in Nashville, Tenn, receiving the DDS degree in 1944. After graduation, he was appointed a member of the nursing faculty and health department of Prairie View Agricultural and Mechanical College in Texas.

A public notice for a dentist to practice in Cairo, Ill, attracted his interest and brought him to that community of approximately 15,000 persons equally divided between black and white Americans. He opened an office in 1945 and built his practice within a short time. He became popular with all segments of the population (about 90% of his patients were nonblack) and in 1950 he was named "Cairo Citizen of the Year."

The years that followed were filled with turmoil: the Civil Rights Movement emerged as a disruptive issue in the United States. As president of Cairo's local chapter of the NAACP, Wallace found himself embroiled in the civil rights struggle. The desegregation of Cairo's public schools eventually resulted in violence. Wallace was singled out as the chief target of the segregationists until order finally was restored.

Military duty interrupted Wallace's civic activities. He was commissioned an army captain during the Korean War and was stationed in Bamberg, Germany, to serve as dentist officer-in-charge of the dependent's clinic. He returned to civilian life in 1955, opening a dental office in Chicago where he soon immersed himself in the processes and programs of organized dentistry.

Wallace affiliated with Chicago's Lincoln Dental Society, a component of the National Dental Association, and gave numerous clinics in restorative dentistry

at the annual meetings of the Lincoln and other local dental societies. He became a member of the Chicago Dental Society, the Illinois State Dental Society, and the American Dental Association (ADA), attending their meetings and carefully observing their methods of organization as well as the prosecution of their scientific programs. His diligence and skills were rewarded when he was elected Secretary of the Lincoln Dental Society in 1958. He aligned with the young progressives bent on revamping the society to bring it in line with the leading dental organizations in the city. He also moved up in the National Dental Association becoming its zone II vice president and was directly responsible for doubling the Association's membership.

Wallace's even temperament, quiet diplomacy, and issue-oriented skills made him a key member of the National Dental Association's Executive Board. His grasp of the "peculiar" beginnings of the national association of black dentists, viewed in the realities of the civil rights struggle, led him to resolve to bring about constructive devices that would facilitate the full participation of Afro-American dentists in American dentistry. He approached American Dental Association officials and sought their cooperation, meaningful dialogue, and positive action.

The first breakthrough in eliminating discriminatory practices in American dentistry occurred in 1962. At the 103rd Annual Session of the American Dental Association in Miami, a historic liaison meeting took place involving officers of both the American and National Dental Associations. Following the liaison conferences, resolutions were introduced to the ADA House of Delegates amending the association's bylaws to give the House the power to suspend the representation of a constituent society if the House determines that the bylaws of the constituent society violated the Constitution and Bylaws of the ADA. The resolution was passed November 1, 1962 (Figure 12).

Of equal importance to the ADA action was Wallace's involvement in discussions leading to the Illinois Board of Dental Examiners' adoption of a regulation banning discriminatory practices among dentists. The regulation stipulated that any dentist who neglected, failed, or refused to render professional services because of the person's race, religion, color, or national origin would be guilty of improper, unprofessional, or dishonorable conduct.

Three years later, the National Conference on Dental Research and Education was held in Washington, DC. This three-day cooperative venture was jointly sponsored by the NDA, AADS, and ADA and was financially



Figure 12. Dr. James Wallace, President, National Dental Association and Dr. Harold Hillenbrand, Executive Director, American Dental Association.

supported by the Procter & Gamble Company. The 200 participants included deans of dental schools, university vice presidents for research and health affairs, and research coordinators. Wallace contributed his superb planning abilities to this outstanding accomplishment.

Recognized and acclaimed by his colleagues, Wallace was installed as NDA President in August 1968. On October 13, 1969, the American Dental Association named him an Honorary Member, making him one of the first two Afro-Americans so designated. Just four days after receiving the highest honor of the ADA, Wallace died suddenly in his sleep at his Chicago home. In 47 years he had blazed trails of productivity and hope that still stand as summits to reach by all who believe passionately in dentistry's morality and its principles of ethics.

SUMMARY

Brief highlights of the careers of 13 Afro-American dentists have been presented. Their professional lives demonstrated both a commitment to the advancement of dentistry and a dedication to the betterment of humanity. Of the 13, three spent their professional lives exclusively in dental education, research, and public health. The remaining 10 were dental clinicians who served patients with competence, care, and concern. Additionally, they contributed to dentistry's image and progress by improving medicodental relations, pioneering in university dental education, engaging in philanthropy, qualifying for dental specialties, exerting leadership in dental professional organizations, integrating dentistry in hospital

care, solving community health problems, and participating in all aspects of dental journalism. A sizable portion of their energies was expended in enhancing the quality of life in their communities and the nation.

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